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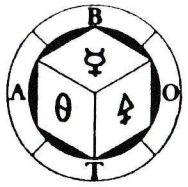
TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

LESSON NO. 33



BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Thirty-three

BONDAGE

The first thing to learn in connection with Key 15 is that what manifests as bondage is an illusion, a wrong construction put upon the principle of limitation. This wrong construction makes that principle take on the appearance of the Devil. The gross, repellant surface of this Key represents that illusion. You must see through it to find out its true meaning.

Let us begin by examining the number 15. In Roman numerals, this is XV. X and V are the last two letters of the word L. V. X., which designates the One Force we concentrate by acts of attention. XV is L. V. X., minus the L.

The L is Lamed which, when used as a verb, means "to instruct"—i.e., a directing power. When used as a noun it means "Ox-goad". Since the Ox-goad was used not only to signal forward motion to the ox, but also to steer him in the desired direction, it may also be considered as a directing power.

L. V. X. minus L therefore suggests the absence of the equilibrating, directive power symbolized by Key 11, which is assigned to Lamed. Hence from the number XV we have an intimation that the Devil represents the One Force, as it operates apart from human knowledge (Lamed as a verb) and human direction (Lamed as noun).

Yet XV is composed also of the numbers X and V. In Tarot, X, or 10, is the Wheel of Fortune which symbolizes the **mechanical** aspect of the cosmic manifestations of the One Force.

Man's conception of the universe as mechanism has been built up from his observation of the cycles of the seasons, and from other observations of recurrent phenomena, among which those studied by astronomers are important. The greater part of the observation responsible for mechanistic theories and philosophies are in fields **below the human level**. The phenomena so observed seem to be the working of a blind aggregation of forces, operating by necessity according to the law of averages.

This law of averages seems to be at work in what is called the survival of the fittest. Yet, as evolution progresses, this law seems to work with somewhat diminished force. A poet once wrote of the life-force, "How careful of the type it seems, how careless of the single life!" In the lower forms of life, countless numbers are wiped out of existence. Only the strongest survive. Thus nature perfects her types.

Behold how different it is with men. Here the survival of the individual takes on increasing importance, because a new principle is at work. This principle is what Tarot pictures by Key 5 or V. It is the principle of **consciousness** which is hidden by the mechanical appearance of the universe.

Thus, when man examines his environment and the fields of existence below him, he builds in his mind the conception of mechanism symbolized by the Wheel of Fortune. When he turns his attention inward toward the Center of his own existence, he discovers the indwelling presence of the Great Revealer, the Hierophant.

Thus X in XV represents the world of objective appearances through which man gains his knowledge of the **outer** aspects of the manifestation of the One Force. V in XV stands for the subjective world of consciousness whence man derives his knowledge of the **significance** of the whirling cycles of change revolving round him.

By combining these two kinds of knowledge, X and V, man finds within himself a guidance which enables him to control his environment. He is waging a successful war against poverty, sickness and death. The war is not over and in some fields the battle seems, as these words are written, to be more in favor of the forces of darkness than a victory for the forces of light.

Yet those who have access to the occult records of the Inner School are not dismayed by the terrors of this age of transition. Even without such knowledge of ages even worse than this, from which humanity has emerged to enter periods of triumphant progress, the careful student of history finds little basis for assent to the gloomy predictions of some that we are about to enter another Dark Age.

The civilization into which most readers of these pages were born is passing away before our eyes. But men and women who have caught the vision recorded in Tarot and in other expressions of the knowledge of the Inner School, are confident that this era is a prelude to a greater measure of freedom and enlightenment for all mankind.

Even in the midst of the present confusion it is possible for one who has developed the degree of conscious unfoldment attained by the enlightened minority, to achieve freedom for himself in spite of the unsettled conditions which terrify most men. The members of this enlightened minority are able to act as channels for the superior powers whereby the automatic forces of nature, below the human level, may be controlled and directed constructively.

The most advanced among these enlightened ones have long foreseen this era. For centuries they have been preparing for the bringing into actual manifestation of that NEW ORDER OF THE AGES which is mentioned in one of the mottoes of the Great Seal of the United States. Largely as a result of their endeavors, forces are being brought to bear which will enable all humanity to exorcise the Devil by adding L to XV, and making V **central**, as in the word L. V. X.

Until very recently, the efforts of this enlightened minority have been directed in the main toward seeking out and assisting individuals to gain a greater measure of control over themselves and conditions. Since about the middle of the nineteenth century however, the Inner School has been active in bringing about a wider dissemination of Ageless Wisdom than could be effected in earlier periods of history.

Today thousands are ready for instruction, where hundreds only were prepared in former times. Yet the enlightened are still in the minority and will be for some decades, or perhaps centuries to come. The main difference now is that the time has arrived when they may, in many parts of the world, work openly without fear of persecution by State or Church. Here in the New World they are beginning to exercise, by various agencies, the **superior power** which is always the accompaniment and consequence of superior enlightenment. While the Old Order falls in ruins, they are making ready for the New Era of light and freedom which is to witness a great advance toward the liberation of **all** humanity.

There are several other points in connection with the number 15 which will help you to relate this Key to others in the series. 15 adds to 6, and by comparing Keys 15 and 6 you will see they are in contrast, yet contain similar details. It is as if Key 15 were a caricature of Key 6.

15 is also the sum of the numbers from 0 to 5. Thus, however unlikely it may appear at first, we may understand that the Devil sums up the powers pictured in Tarot from the Fool to the Hierophant, inclusive. You have learned also that 14 is related to 5. Now, since 15 is the "theosophic extension" of 5, there ought to be a connection between Keys 14 and 15. See how many evidences of this connection you can find by comparing the two Keys.

The letter printed on Key 15 is **Ayin**. Its primary meaning is "eye". Other meanings are: "A fountain", and "outward show, or superficial appearance".

For ages past, in all parts of the world, the All-seeing Eye has been a symbol of Deity. Thus Key 15, no matter how strange it may seem to unaccustomed minds, must have something to do with certain aspects of the One Power theologians call God. Add to this the ideas related to the word "fountain" and you will begin to understand that this Key veils occult doctrines about God as the fountain of manifestation, or source of creation. Add now the third meaning of Ayin, and you will see that Key 15 must be interpreted as a symbol of the One Identity considered as **the source of the forms and appearances of relative existence.**

The human eye as the organ of vision, hints at a relationship between the ideas corresponding to Ayin and those connected with the attribution of the function of sight to the letter Heh, represented in Tarot by Key 4. It is a commonplace that the sense of sight, important as it is, is also a source of manifold illusions and deceptions. What student of elementary psychology is not familiar with the phenomena of optical illusions? We all know we must make mental adjustments in order to interpret correctly what we see. If a man standing on the rear platform of a train accepted the report of his sense of sight at face value, he would be under the delusion that the parallel tracks over which the train had just passed were moving toward each other as they receded.

Yet our eyes deceive us only if we let them. Here is a direct connection between the meaning of the letter Ayin and the title of Key 15, for **devil** is derived from the Greek **diabolos**, meaning "a traducer, a slanderer". An old proverb says appearances are deceiving and Jesus counseled his disciples not to judge by appearance. In the New Testament, also, the Devil is called the "father of lies", that is, the progenitor, source, or principle of falsehood, confusion, error and mental disorder.

Thus the Devil represents the fundamental fallacy whence all other falsehoods proceed. This is the error of supposing that a reality called "matter" is opposed to another reality called "Spirit". Or the error that matter is the only reality and that whatever man designates by the noun "Spirit" is no more than an intellectual abstraction.

The Sanskrit word for matter is **Maya**. One of it's meanings is "illusion". The Occidental mind tends to accept the world of appearances, which we call the objective universe, as the only reality. Oriental philosophers, on the other hand, tend to interpret the objective, phenomenal world as being an unreal phantasmagoria of ever-shifting appearances.

Ageless Wisdom reconciles these opposing interpretations. It says the term **reality** applies to **both** worlds. The outer world may be Maya or illusion in one sense of that term. Yet what we call "Matter" is actually the "appearance" of what we call "Spirit" as it enters the field of name and form. Both are real. Hence we should not try to separate the reality of the **appearance** from the reality of the **One Identity** which **makes** the appearance.

Error creeps in when we try to establish any such separation between the appearance and what may be termed the "Appearer". The seeming "Two" are really "One" and are not in opposition.

Thus Qabalists attribute to the letter Ayin the twenty-sixth path on the Tree of Life. This is a diagram showing the various relations between the different aspects of the Life-power. It is, so to say, the skeleton or framework for the construction of Tarot. The number assigned to the path of Ayin is important because 26 is the numeral value of the Divine Name, Jehovah. Moreover, the aspect of the Life-power corresponding to the twenty-sixth path is called the

Renewing Intelligence. It is said to be so called "because by it the Holy God renews all that is begun afresh in the creation of the world."

Consider these words carefully. They give an important clue to what is meant by "creation". For "begun afresh" distinctly intimates that the beginning of any cycle of creation is actually a renewal of activity related to other cycles preceding this beginning.

Consider this in connection with the meaning of Ayin as "fountain". A fountain is a spring whence flows water which nourishes the growth of plants and makes waste places fertile. Where there is a fountain in a desert there is an oasis. Usually it is ringed with trees, and when viewed from a height, looks like an eye in the face of the landscape.

Yet the fountain in an oasis does not make the water which flows from it. It is the beginning of a little stream which trickles from it. This brooklet joins itself with others until they all unite in a river which ultimately reaches the sea. The fountain "begins afresh", but is fed by rain falling from clouds formed by evaporation from the ocean. The fountain is not an original source. It is simply a point at the commencement of a particular cycle.

In a magical manuscript of the sixteenth century, quoted by Eliphas Levi in the introduction to his TRANSCENDENTAL MAGIC, we read that among the powers and privileges of an adept, those connected with the letter Ayin are: "To force nature to make him free at his pleasure." We find, moreover, these startling words in the first verse of the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit, to be tempted by the devil."

This is the literal translation of the Greek original. It provides an important clue to the mystery of Key 15. Note that the Spirit did the leading for the specific purpose of **testing** Jesus. Here bear in mind what you have learned from the two preceding lessons concerning the need for verification. The Devil begins to appear to have some good use.

Consider also what is written in Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan came also." There is no hint that Satan is prohibited from coming into Jehovah's presence. He is one of the company of the "Sons of God" the "Beni-Elohim".

In Qabalah, the Beni-Elohim are said to be a choir of angels associated with the Sphere of Mercury, or field of Mercurial influence. That is, they have to do with the phase of consciousness represented by the Magician. This is the "Mercury of the Sages", human self-consciousness making contact with its environment through the senses, the chief of which is the sense of sight.

What must we conclude from all this? First, that the **appearances which deceive us are necessary** to the manifestation of the Life-power. Furthermore, that to attain to our full

stature as human beings, so that we are in a position to force nature to make us free at our pleasure, we must be subjected to tests and trials of our faith. These trials are imposed on us by appearances.

The Book of Job is an elaboration of this theme. So are the four Gospels. The "mystery of evil" is no mystery to those who have met and passed the trials of faith. Every person who has left a report of his experience of the higher order of knowing has testified that in that experience **all consciousness of evil vanishes.**

"All very well", you may say, "but I am acutely aware of the economic, social and political evils of our time. I have some shortcomings myself and most of the people round me are simply dreadful. No amount of fine theory will erase the slums, raze the hospitals, empty the insane asylums and prisons."

Granted. Yet the way of life which leads to realization of man's true place in the scheme of things does more than banish consciousness of evil. It is no mere anesthetic. It brings with it power to transmute all semblances of evil into manifestations of positive good. Thus the magical manuscript already quoted ends with these words:

"The wise man rules the elements, stills tempests, cures the diseased by his touch, and raises the dead. . . . The initiates know, and as for others, whether they deride, doubt, or believe, whether they threaten or fear—what matters it to science or to us?"

Until we experience the higher order of knowing, we may have difficulty with the various appearances of evil. We may wonder why our surroundings are so full of misery; but even without the higher knowledge, reason will take us far.

Logic forces us to attribute the manifestation of the visible universe to a power which is essentially good. A power, moreover, which is wholly wise. Thus it follows that even though appearances are deceiving, **appearance itself** is necessary for the perfect manifestation of the Life-power. The universe, as Oriental philosophers assert, may be **Maya**, but on the hypothesis that it proceeds from an all-wise, all-good, all-powerful Source, then, whether we can explain it or not, we are forced to conclude that this power to deceive the human mind and originate all sorts of delusion is somehow useful, somehow part of the universal order.

This involves no denial whatever of the various appearances of relative evil. Nor does Ageless Wisdom narcotize us into an indifferent acceptance of appearances at face value. Precisely those persons who have done and are doing most to banish illness, sorrow and pain from the lives of their contemporaries, are the persons who bear witness to the reality of a higher order of knowing in which all consciousness of evil disappears.

Here Tarot affords us a clue by the attribution to Key 15 of the zodiacal sign Capricorn, ruled by Saturn, planet of limitation and restriction. In Capricorn, moreover, Mars is exalted, or has

its highest field of expression. Thus we may expect to find in Key 15 a symbolic representation of power which both binds and liberates.

In its binding aspect it creates form. All forms have definite limitations. All release of energy, as we saw in our study of Key 13, which represents another aspect of the operation of the Mars force, requires dissolution of forms. In Capricorn, then, these opposite aspects of reality are brought together.

As applied to the keyword of our lesson, the meaning is this: Form necessitates limitation, and in our experience limitation is bondage. Yet the very limitations which gall us may become spurs to actions which set us free.

See how clearly this is indicated by the first column of Keys in the tableau given in Lesson 2, page 4. The practice of concentration (Key 1) puts into operation the law of suggestion (Key 8) which results in a renewal of consciousness that releases us from bondage (Key 15). When the force of Mars, represented by the Magician's red robe, is brought to bear by concentration, it effects a regeneration which dissolves the appearances of limitation.

Through Ayin, again, Key 15 is associated with the idea of Mirth. Laughter is caused by perception of the incongruous. It is but a step from this to the truth that joy results from recognizing the incongruity between appearances of limitation and the fact that man is the immediate agent of the One Identity. Experimental recognition of this fact brings an experience of the most intense bliss, far beyond, yet comparable to the most ecstatic sense-experiences known to man.

Finally, to return to the title of Key 15, there is an old saying: "The Devil is God as He is misunderstood by the wicked." This means that the monstrous figure in Key 15 is a symbol of man's ignorant notions of the true nature of Reality and more especially of man's false opinions concerning his own place in the scheme of things. This ignorance is the real Devil, and because it may be overcome, they who set their feet upon the ancient Way of Liberation learn how to banish the Devil and destroy his works.

This week, as you color Key 15, notice particularly that this hideous figure is an impossible combination of incongruities. Never did this nightmare shape exist outside the realm of distorted fancy, and it never can.

COLORING INSTRUCTIONS

KEY 15. THE DEVIL

Yellow:	Insignia above cross below navel of the Devil. The hair of the male and female figures, the torch flame, and the tail of the male figure are yellow, shot with red.
Green:	Tail of female figure.
Brown:	Feathers, legs and horns of the Devil, torch handle, foreground, body and wings of the Devil (this is more effective if a little gray be mixed with diluted brown to give a dull, earthy color).
Steel:	Chains, ring on pedestal.
White:	Star, beard, horns of male and female figures.
Red:	Cross on devil's body, grapes on tail of female figure, Devil's eyes. Note also what is said under YELLOW.